

Research materials on “spiritual social action, compiled by Leddy Hammock, 2007:

The following material, selected in support of the proposition that New Thought has a fundamental interest and a history of deep commitment in spiritual social action, is taken from *Each Mind a Kingdom – American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement, 1875-1920*, by Beryl Satter (Berkeley, California: University of California Press), pages 83-85 and 192-200.

“In addition to teaching, [Emma Curtis] Hopkins engaged in numerous other projects to spread her version of Christian Science. In 1886 she became the editor of the *Mental Science Magazine*. She left the magazine in 1887 and began writing for the *Christian Metaphysician* Regular contributors included Warren Felt Evans, Alice Stockham, and Abby Morton Diaz, the well-known president of the Boston-based Women’s Educational and Industrial Union

Women predominated at every level of Hopkins’ numerous organizational endeavors, from students to ordained clergy to the presidents of local Hopkins associations. The handful of men who were involved understood themselves to be reverently following the lead of ‘woman.’ For example, mental healer Dr. Eugene Weeks¹ spoke at Hopkins Metaphysical Association meetings only to pay ‘beautiful tribute’ to ‘exalted womanhood’

Hopkins quickly attracted the attention of a number of nationally prominent women Poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox continued her affiliation with Hopkins and published in her journal. Clara Colby, editor of the *Woman’s Tribune* (the official organ of the National Woman’s Suffrage Association), regularly advertised in the pages of Christian Science and visited the paper’s offices when passing through Chicago. Perhaps most impressive was the support of Elizabeth Boynton Harbert. As longtime president of the Illinois Woman’s Suffrage Association, founder of the Illinois Social Science Association, the Illinois Woman’s Press Association, and the Evanston Woman’s Club, publisher of a woman’s suffrage paper, and weekly columnist for the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, Harbert had extensive political connections. She attended meetings of the Hopkins Metaphysical Association, offered the group the use of her Evanston home, and was even offered the directorship of the Christian Science Theological Seminary (which she declined because of ‘over-pressure of duties’).

Harbert was probably instrumental in getting Hopkins to contribute Bible lessons to the *Inter-Ocean*. Hopkins’ Inter-Ocean Bible studies ran weekly from 1890 through 1898. Harbert also gave a warm speech at the ordination ceremony of Hopkins’ first class of seminarians. Ignoring the two men² among the graduates, she hailed the ceremony as evidence of a ‘glad new time come to us’ in which ‘woman goes forth to proclaim the radiant realities of the Good.’ Suffrage and temperance activist Louisa Southworth had a similar interpretation of the ordination ceremony. ‘It was my privilege to be present at the Ceremony of the New Era, the ordaining of women by a woman, and the sending them forth to do both moral and physical healing by the power of the Spirit,’ Southworth wrote.

¹Dr. Eugene B. Weeks was the New Thought speaker whose words had so inspired Myrtle Fillmore in 1886 in Kansas City.

²Evidently, Charles Fillmore was one of these men, and Myrtle Fillmore was among the celebrated women of the first ordination class of the Hopkins Theological Seminary.

Hopkins took concrete steps to align herself with the broader woman movement. The Hopkins Metaphysical Association sent representatives to the Woman's Alliance, a Chicago-based coalition of reform-oriented women's groups. The association also headquartered its 'Columbian Congress of Christian Scientists,' a group organized to participate in the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, at the Fair's 'woman's building,' the Queen Isabella. (In contrast, Eddy chose to locate her group at the more gender-neutral World's Parliament of Religions area)"

"A small group of white middle-class women, linked by ties of friendship and years of overlapping political work, formed the core leadership of the women's clubs and women's suffrage, temperance, kindergarten, social purity, and working-women's aid societies that dominated the 1890' woman movement Many were sympathetic to unionized workers' claims But they also believed that the solution to society's problems ultimately resided in the perfection of the individual through perfection of the environment and so of the race. 'Woman' played a central role in this perfection, not only through her cheerful industry, but also through her powers of pure, desireless rationality and neonatal and postnatal maternal influence. Many believed that the practices of New Thought healers represented an exciting new means by which woman could be purified, the race perfected, and the republic saved.

Prominent members of this network include Elizabeth Boynton Harbert, Lucinda Chandler, Abby Morton Diaz, Helen Campbell, Clara Colby, and Frances Willard

Harbert was also intimately associated with the New Thought movement She was an early supporter of Emma Curtis Hopkins In [her final novel] *Amore*³ Harbert attempted to synthesize her political and spiritual outlook. . . . [In her book, a group called the Truth Seekers believes] that 'in order to secure harmony we must combine differences, including the differences between manliness and womanliness. Also basic to their outlook is the faith that every child has the potential to become a 'child-angel.' Some Truth Seekers therefore propose that the nation devote itself to the nurturing of children and be presided over by a male and a female president. The group is also sympathetic to women's suffrage, socialism, prohibition, compulsory education, kindergartens, dress reform, the Chautaugua idea, and university extensions. However, they believe that 'the universal recognition of the laws of love . . . [will] usher in the millennium

Harbert argues that while reform work is important, ultimately human nature must be regenerated. It must become high-minded and spiritual, not lowly and material. This is why *Amore* argues that the 'Golden Age' will only come about 'under the inspiration and intuitional guidance of a great-souled woman.' Woman can transform human nature because she embodies the 'divinity of motherhood,' or a pure, loving, spiritual, and self-sacrificing character. As a reformer she can inspire and uplift others. As a mother she can use neonatal influence to enlighten her offspring. As reformer or mother, woman's influence can be strengthened and consciously directed through New Thought meditation practices.

Harbert's *Amore* provides a fascinating elucidation of the ways in which a spiritualist-Theosophist-New Thought perspective could alleviate the emotional turmoil of the white middle-class woman who hoped to 'save' her 'sister woman.' Her problems were numerous. The reformer despaired over the magnitude of the horrors facing women, from 'child-brides and slave mothers' to 'the agony of outraged womanhood, and enforced motherhood.' She wrestled with 'fear of possible mistake in [her]

³The heroine of this novel always wears white; we recall that Myrtle Fillmore's twelve designated Healers, who sat in the front rows at the center in Kansas City, and who were available to treat with individuals after services, were known as the "women in white."

plans for [humanity's] uplift.' She suffered the mortification of being 'sneered at' by the 'very women for whom [she was] undergoing martyrdom'

A faith in New Thought meditation, telepathy and reincarnation could solve all of these problems. The '*problem of evil*' was solved by fait that humanity was essentially spiritual, not material. This meant that all women were in fact free, since nothing could enslave the spirit. Faith in doctrines of reincarnation helped the reformer deal with the glacial pace of social change. The reformer's conviction that she inhabited a higher 'sphere' helped her to cope with being misunderstood. Indeed, reformers who learned to enter the 'silence' would become as powerful and imperturbable as the God of Love. They would not 'faint, despair, or die, although for a time misunderstood and unloved, so long as there remain[ed] to them the right to be loved, and the opportunity for service'

Lucinda Banister Chandler (1828-?) was a friend and political ally of Elizabeth Boynton Harbert Chandler insisted that women could control maternity only if they had full economic, legal, and political independence. The parlor talks that she organized to discuss her ideas led to the formation of the Moral Education Society of Boston, the first of its kind in the nation. Dedicated to the promotion of 'enlightened parenthood' and a single high standard of sexual purity for men and women, moral-education societies quickly spread to New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and other major cities

Chandler became the vice-president of the National Woman Suffrage Association, and after moving to Chicago in the early 1880's she became vice-president of the Illinois Woman's Christian Temperance Alliance and president of the Chicago Moral Education Society In the 1890's Chandler joined the Illinois Woman's Press Association where she served on committees with Alice Stockham, Francis Willard, and Emma Curtis Hopkins' followers, Ida B. Nichols and Helen Van-Anderson.

By the 1890's Chandler had adopted 'Christian Socialism' as well as a doctrine she called "Americanism.' She argued that humanity only evolved in conditions of liberty If women were free, they could use their spiritual powers to 'mold pre-natal life' and thereby promote the 'race building' which is the true meaning of Americanism⁴

Chandler's belief in woman's spiritual power her faith in neonatal influence, and her desire to perfect 'the race'—as well as her long association with Harbert, Stockham, Wilmans, and other New Thought advocates—perhaps explain why she ultimately embraced New Thought beliefs Only since Mesmer have we understood 'the power of mind in directing and controlling mind,' Chandler wrote. But now that women have fully comprehended the 'possibilities of soul energy and thought-force,' her argument continued, they can 'begin the transformation of civilization that will bring the new heaven and the new earth'

Abby Morton Diaz (1821-1904) was another prominent late nineteenth-century reformer whose New Thought beliefs were tightly interwoven with her woman-movement and socialist-political outlook. Diaz was a member of the New England Woman's Club, president of the Moral Education Association of Boston, and the founder and for twelve years (1881-1892) the president of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union. She was . . . a suffrage supporter, a popular lecturer at women's clubs, and a member of the Boston Honorary Committee of the American Purity Alliance.

Diaz was also deeply involved in the New Thought movement. In 1886 she published two New Thought pamphlets, *The Law of Perfection* and *Spirit as a Power*. The following year she wrote numerous articles for the *Christian Metaphysician*, an early mind-cure journal In 1895 she

⁴Myrtle Fillmore was involved in this socio-religious climate, and expressed many of these ideas in her "Healing Letters," including her "Maternity Lessons," long published in tract form.

helped to found the Metaphysical Club of Boston. Throughout the late 1890's and early 1900's she wrote articles for *Mind*, the most prominent New Thought journal of its time

Diaz attempted to prevent an identification with all-powerful spirit from creating arrogant or complacent behavior. She did so by elaborating upon the concept of 'Obligation,' or the duty to behave in ways that demonstrated one's spiritual character. The power of spirit meant that all humanity was one. Therefore people must feel, and act upon, their kinship with the poor rag-woman on the street.' Since they could, through meditation, learn to be one with God, they must manifest divine qualities. As God 'gives forth,' so should people give forth in time, money, strength, and sympathy. As God is love, so must they 'create a sort of love atmosphere' in the world.

Diaz's spiritual beliefs led her to endorse a political vision quite similar to that of the 'Truth Seekers' in Harbert's novel *Amore*. In an 1895 article published in *The Arena*, Diaz wrote that 'reforms, charities, philanthropies, missions, rescue works, tenement-house leagues, pauper institutions, watch and ward societies, good government societies, prison associations, prohibition schemes, and our innumerable legal and penal enactments' would never get to the core of the problem, which was our need to 'come into line with the laws of the universe.' These laws involved, first, the right of every human being to fulfill its individual potential, and second, the substitution of the 'law of Oneness for the competition and . . . *Selfness* now thought permanently established. Womanly self-sacrifice, not manly competition, was the key to a just and spiritual society.

It would not be easy to 'do away with selfness,' Diaz admitted. But there were steps one could take. One begins by forming 'a mental picture of our world as it would be with Truth, Love, Justice in entire control.' One then works to mold public opinion to the point at which the nation will demand a new educational system. At its heart, Diaz concluded, would be kindergartens and 'an advanced department of *Parenthood Enlightenment*, whereby children shall be better born and better reared.' Once again, a New Thought-inflected race perfection was cast as the ultimate savior of the republic. But Diaz's emphasis on 'obligation' made her religious system compatible with compassion, analysis, and political activism.

Helen Campbell (1839-1918) helped to launch the home economics movement in the 1870's. By the 1880's she had begun to investigate the condition of the urban poor in general, and the effects of low wages on poor woman in particular. She became one of the nations' pioneering urban investigators. Campbell's studies helped to convince social-purity leaders that there was a link between exploitative economic conditions and prostitution. In 1891 she won an award from the American Economic Association for her monograph 'Women wage-Earners.' In the mid 1890's, Campbell worked with her dear friends Charlotte Perkins Gilman (then Stetson), and Paul Tyner, a reform journalist,⁵ to put out a Populist-Socialist-woman-movement journal entitled the *Impress*. She worked at a Chicago settlement house

Campbell was also a New Thought enthusiast. In 1896 she wrote a glowing article about Greenacre, the New Thought Chautaugua run by Helen Van-Anderson's friend Sarah Farmer. In 1897 Campbell co-edited a collection of writings by Horatio Dresser, a prominent New Thought author who was the son of Phineas Quimby's students Julius and Annetta Dresser. Horatio Dresser edited a magazine, the *Journal of Practical Metaphysics*, that attempted to strengthen the ties between New Thought and reform. Campbell contributed regularly to Dresser's journal. In one article she write that 'the 'new thought' performs . . . the inestimable service' of helping the individual realize the 'purpose of all life' – that is, '[t]o unfold from within.' In 1904 Campbell served on the New Thought

⁵Paul Tyner was a "major force behind the International Metaphysical League, the forerunner of the International New Thought Alliance" (p. 213).

Federation. Fellow board members included Nona Brooks, Horatio Dresser, Charles Fillmore, Alice Stockham, Ursula Gestefeld, Helen Van-Anderson, Sarah Farmer, and Ralph Waldo Trine.

As Campbell understood it, New Thought helped spiritualize humanity. Therefore it could only speed the pace of reform. She explained that even though the ‘passion for money-making is strong in Anglo Saxon blood,’ an awareness that ‘spirit is the only real substance’ could convince people that they were related to and responsible for one another. Then the wealthy would happily donate the money reformers needed if they were to provide the material services that helped prevent delinquency and crime. An appreciation of the power of intuition would also prevent younger settlement workers, most of whom had done postgraduate work in sociology, from treating with ‘superciliousness’ the older settlement women (like Campbell herself) who had been ‘born too soon for college training.’ In sum, she viewed the joining of ‘intuition and reason,’ or head and heart, as the key to reform work. Campbell cited Dresser to support her view. ‘[I]deal and realization . . . feeling and thought . . . theory and practice . . . mind matter are so many members of one whole,’ she quoted. Campbell’s New Thought beliefs, like those of Abby Morton Diaz, were compatible with political activism. They helped Campbell to extend a lauding of the ideal character of ‘head and heart’ to include a broader healing of society.

Clara Bewick Colby (1846-1916) served as president of the Nebraska Woman Suffrage Association for thirteen years. A close friend of Elizabeth Cady Stanton⁶, Colby contributed to Stanton’s *Woman’s Bible*. She was a delegate to the International Moral Education Congress in 1908 and a chairman of the National American Woman Suffrage Association’s Committee on Industrial Problems Affecting Women and Children Suffrage

Colby’s interest in News Thought dated at least to 1889, when she visited the offices of Emma Curtis Hopkins’ *Christian Science* magazine. She was soon advertising her *Women’s Tribune* in New Thought periodicals. An advertisement she placed in an 1899 volume of Wilman’s *Freedom* was particularly striking. It presented endorsements for the journal by three lions of the woman movement—France Willard, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Helen Wilmans. Colby clearly hoped to bring New Thought women into the woman movement. She also used the columns of the *Woman’s Tribune* to expose her friends to New Thought, Theosophy, and Eastern Religious beliefs. When women’s-suffrage amendments were about to be voted upon in several state legislatures in 1912, Colby wrote to Elizabeth Boynton Harbert that she hoped to organize a ‘world rally of New Thought forces’ to ensure that the laws would be passed. Colby eventually became an honorary vice-president of the International New Thought Alliance.⁷

Although Woman’s Christian Temperance Union president France Willard (1839-1898) was a committed Methodist, New Thought ideas were not far from her own evangelical perspective Willard served on a number IWPA [Illinois Women’s Press Association] committees with Stockham, Lucinda Chandler, Emma Curtis Hopkins, Ursula Gestefeld, and Helen Van-Anderson. She had kind words for ‘Christian Science mind-cure,’ as she called it. Willard wrote a supporting blurb for Charles Newcomb’s 1897 New Thought tract, *All’s Right With the World*. She commented that its ‘very title is an inspiration. I have it on my dressing bureau, and am looking it over with much solace of spirit.’

⁶Though many folks in Unity mention a relationship between Elizabeth Cady Stanton and H. Emilie Cady, I called author, Beryl Satter on the phone some time ago, to ask her about this, and she verified that she had found no evidence of any biological relationship between the two; she explained that “Cady” was a common name in that part of the country. Still, she admitted, there seemed to be a strong relationship in beliefs.

⁷In 1918, Emma Curtis Hopkins was voted honorary president of the INTA.

Willard's section on '*The Mind Cure*' in her 1889 autobiography *Glimpses of Fifty Years* revealed her detailed knowledge of New Thought and her hopes that it would help bring about the triumph of spirit. She wrote that just when the world

had so largely become a victim to the theory that only seeing is believing, the Heavenly Powers brought in this great reaction, which declared that the invisible is all and in all, that thoughts are the real things and things are but effervescent shadows; that there is no escape from what is infinitely good and infinitely immanent in everything created; that evil is a negation and must pass away; that to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”

BACCALAUREATE ADDRESS

by Emma Curtis Hopkins, President of the Christian Science* Theological Seminary at Chicago, Illinois

“From time to time there have been men and women of a character and work unquestionably marking them as sent of Him to announce His will and purpose to the children of [humanity]. When such have come among [hu]mankind they have not needed the great churches back of them, nor the recognition of the learned and powerful among [humanity] to support their claims as ministers of the Gospel of the Good.

It has always been accorded by the wise that the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or the quickening influence of the principle of divine Intelligence is the test of the called to teach the words and will of the Supreme of the universe. Those so called have not needed to quote authorities or precedents for their actions or for teachings. They have all spoken as having authority, and not as the scribes or recorders of other [persons'] teachings. They have all come like messengers of goodness and freedom to [humanity] at just the time when recognized teachers of the world were quoting authorities to hold their doctrines in repute among a dissatisfied and restless people

[His listeners] were amazed at [Jesus'] doctrine because He taught as bested with authority. Like all the inspired who had preceded Him He proved Himself God-sent by doing God-like works. The suns which had daily set upon crowds of sick and miserable people arose at morning time to overlook joyous multitudes, healed by the divine minister of the Gospel of health. The wicked turned from the error of their ways. The mad and despairing smiled and were at peace. The poor were helped and fed

There have been such lonely workers in our own time. They have all heard the voice of the spirit and felt the impulse of goodness stirring them to go forth to help the world. They have looked over the religions and sciences of the intellectually great which have held sway in this hearts of the people, and have noted that under their ages of dominion there have been abuses and unjust dealings which the religions and sciences have proved powerless to abolish or bring into disrepute.

Their hearts, being moved in compassion, have strengthened their judgments till they cry with one voice against the old disputations, and with one voice declare for a new and a true, wherein the poor may be taught and befriended, women walk fearless and glad, and children be safe and free. Every fibre and thread of their being, every instant of their time is absolutely dedicated to the prophesied new dispensation of the Holy Spirit with its Ministry of healing from every ill known to the old times

Now from this presence we send you forth to the world that waits for the healing benediction of the Spirit with which you have been baptized. You have been tried and not found wanting. You have been called and been answered by that fullness of power by which the devout in all ages have prayed. You can heal the sick by the word of your speaking. You can cheer the fainting. When hearts are cast down you shall say, "there is lifting up." You are the revival of the full ministry of the times of old. The Lord himself shall guide you continually, and you shall want for no good thing. Be not afraid of the speech of people, not seek for the world's favor. Speak the word boldly that is given you to utter.

For this is the faith of the fathers,
The faith the apostles delivered."

Delivered in Chicago, 1891.

The following passages are teachings of the "Teacher of Teachers" that were probably heard by the Fillmores, and possibly helped to quicken their hearts to minister in New Thought. These statements are relevant to spiritual social action; quotations are taken from the *Bible Interpretations* by Emma Curtis Hopkins, circa 1880's:

"The angels can ne'er be joyous while [hu]mankind weeps; while even one of the cash girls in a store is tired . . ."

"It is not likely that . . . a Christlike man could get as much gold as the oil trust without hiring little pale boys to help him, as they have to do. It is not likely that any but a Christlike man could keep his strength and health and beauty always fresh right here on this coast place called human existence. The very fact that all these conditions are worrisome shows that the Christlike man has been driven back to the interior. He is hidden, but not dead. He needs calling back again. He needs to be sought. Even before we get very far in our calling, it seems by these texts, we feel his quality."

"'Vox populi, vox dei' [the voice of the people is the voice of God] is not a commonly accepted principle. Make it accepted and corporations could not possibly own the gold mines or the oil wells. [Humanity] would share and share alike in all that nature has exposed, for that is the people's ideal . . ."

About once in so long a principle announced embodies itself. There was once a prophecy that in these days the Messiah should appear on earth everywhere as a tramp and beggar. He should be the Buddha principle disguised in rags, but omnipotent in secret idea.

The omnipotent secret idea He holds is, '*Equal rights, equal rights, equal rights.*' Tramping close to palace gates, tramping over castle grasses, ascending regal stairways, crying on the White House lawns, the Buddha idea arriveth on prophecy's procrastinating steeds.

As he rusheth forward he strengtheneth his idea of equal rights with a drink of the principle called 'equal opportunities.' As he reviveth his quaff he tasteth of a nerving proposition called 'now, today,' and this makes him the manifest rebel, namely, *Jesus Christ.*"